

Secretary of Defense to revisit this question.

The importance of minimizing harm to civilians in conflict cannot be overstated. For far too long, senior officials of United States and other countries' armed forces spoke little about civilian casualties, treating them as regrettable collateral damage that is inevitable in warfare. In fact, if the laws of war are to be taken seriously, they require effective procedures and rigorous enforcement. CIVIC's mission, 20 years after Marla Ruzicka compelled us to pay attention, is as relevant today as it was then, to ensure that everything is done that can and should be done to protect civilians in conflict, and to assist those who are harmed. By doing so we reaffirm our respect for human life and human dignity that people around the world expect of us, we mitigate anger and resentment within local populations whose support we need, and we enhance the reputation and mission of our own Armed Forces.

RECOGNIZING HIGHER EDUCATION IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the incredible institutions of higher education in my home State. Like many Vermonters, I was the first in my family to attend college—I chose a small, liberal arts, Catholic college—Saint Michael's College in Colchester, VT. St. Mike's, as it is affectionately called, was a home away home for me during some of my most formative years. It was there that I met my wife Marcelle, received my B.A. in government, and from where I left to receive my JD from Georgetown University Law Center.

Higher education is a path out of poverty and towards personal and professional growth for so many Americans. When those who choose to seek higher education, are able to do so—everyone succeeds. Throughout my 48 years in the Senate, I have worked to increase access to higher education through programs such as TRIO, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, Pell grants, and Federal Work-Study. I know how important these programs are because I am a product of a quality Vermont education. Each year, thousands of students attend Vermont colleges and universities. My alma mater, St. Mike's, is not the only quality school—but one of many.

The University of Vermont, founded in 1791, is a public land-grant research university that has championed agricultural, opioid-misuse, rural development, and medical research, among many other fields of study. I have been honored to be one of UVM's biggest fans and supporters in Congress. Throughout his tenure, President Garimella has been an incredible partner of mine and Marcelle, and I look forward to spending more time with him and his wife in Burlington.

Another legendary institution is the Vermont State College system. Today,

it is comprised of several outstanding institutions: Castleton, Northern Vermont University, VT Tech, and Community Colleges of Vermont. Each of them in their own right have made a name for themselves through great strides in nursing and teaching workforce development, creating high-technology manufacturing jobs, rethinking remote learning, and expanding opportunity for mid-career learners.

I recognize that the future of higher education is often disputed. What does it offer young people in the face of uncertainty and economic insecurity? The cost of higher education has ballooned and has become out of reach for too many families. Higher education's intent has become lost. Higher education—college or university—should never be a prerequisite to a job that supports one's family.

However, higher education—such as the extension program at UVM or the language programs at Middlebury College—provide the tools to better understand our complex and constantly changing universe. They provide a challenge to get to know ourselves better and a community to sustain us.

I rise today to honor one of the places, one of the communities that first raised me, gave me a home, and a purpose. From my time travelling throughout the State, I have met Vermonters who are cybersecurity experts, doctors, researchers, mechanics, arborists, and teachers. Many of them, like me, were the first in their family to seek continuing education and many have told me that they never could have imagined this bright of a future.

I am confident that long after my tenure in the Senate, Vermont colleges and universities will continue to provide a home, challenge, and pathway to the future for Vermonters and students from around the world.

TRIBUTE TO NANCY PELOSI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before the conclusion of the 117th Congress, I want to add a few of my own congratulations to the outgoing Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, as she concludes her second history-making and history-changing tenure as Speaker.

It is a cliché to begin these kinds of tributes with the obligatory observation that the person speaking and the subject of the reflections had their fair share of disagreements. In this particular case, that cliché certainly applies in full. Over the course of our careers, Speaker PELOSI and I have disagreed both frequently and forcefully on practically every kind of national issue that comes before Congress. We have led opposite parties. We have spent many years fighting hard on behalf of policies, ideas, and visions that usually sharply diverged.

But all of the frequent interactions that have brought our differences into sharp relief have also given me a close-up view of the formidable qualities

that fueled the Speaker's historic life journey to becoming the first woman ever to lead the House and made her such an effective advocate for her party's point of view.

Throughout our Nation's history, rising to prominence in Congress has often seen leaders sorted into competing archetypes of either a pragmatist or an idealist. But Speaker PELOSI's leadership has resembled a combination of both. Even while working to synthesize the views of the entire Democratic Caucus, the Speaker never relinquished her own passionate, substantive set of convictions on policy matters.

Speaker PELOSI's ability to marshal her side of the aisle to support specific tactics and outcomes has been formidable. It has made her a powerful partner to multiple Democratic Presidents. These abilities paved the way for the Speaker's instrumental role in helping to deliver a long list of consequential policy changes. I have no doubt that historians will reserve Speaker PELOSI a place on their lists of the most influential and consequential Speakers that our country has seen thus far.

On the very rare occasions when the Speaker and I did find ourselves rowing in the same direction—such as our shared determination that the House and Senate reconvene as soon as humanly possible on the evening of January 6, 2021, and complete our constitutional duties straightaway—I was glad to have this formidable leader in my corner.

I congratulate the Speaker on the conclusion of her time leading the House.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have historically supported disaster assistance to farmers and others who experience losses due to no fault of their own.

However, I had to vote no on Senator SCOTT's disaster relief standalone amendment. As a lifelong family farmer and taxpayer watchdog, I have fought for many years to close loopholes that have allowed some farming operations to exploit Federal farm payments at taxpayer expense.

Congress has been generous when it comes to supporting farmers. Farmers have federally subsidized crop insurance, commodity payments, and supplemental disaster payments. Farmers also had access to Market Facilitation Program during the Trump administration and Coronavirus Food Assistance payments in the past couple years.

The Scott amendment would remove any payment limit to the disaster supplemental payments. This is a dangerous precedent to set. This amendment would release the spigot of disaster payments to wealthy farmers without regard to how much total assistance we are providing, which could mean less funding for family farmers who really need the help most.